

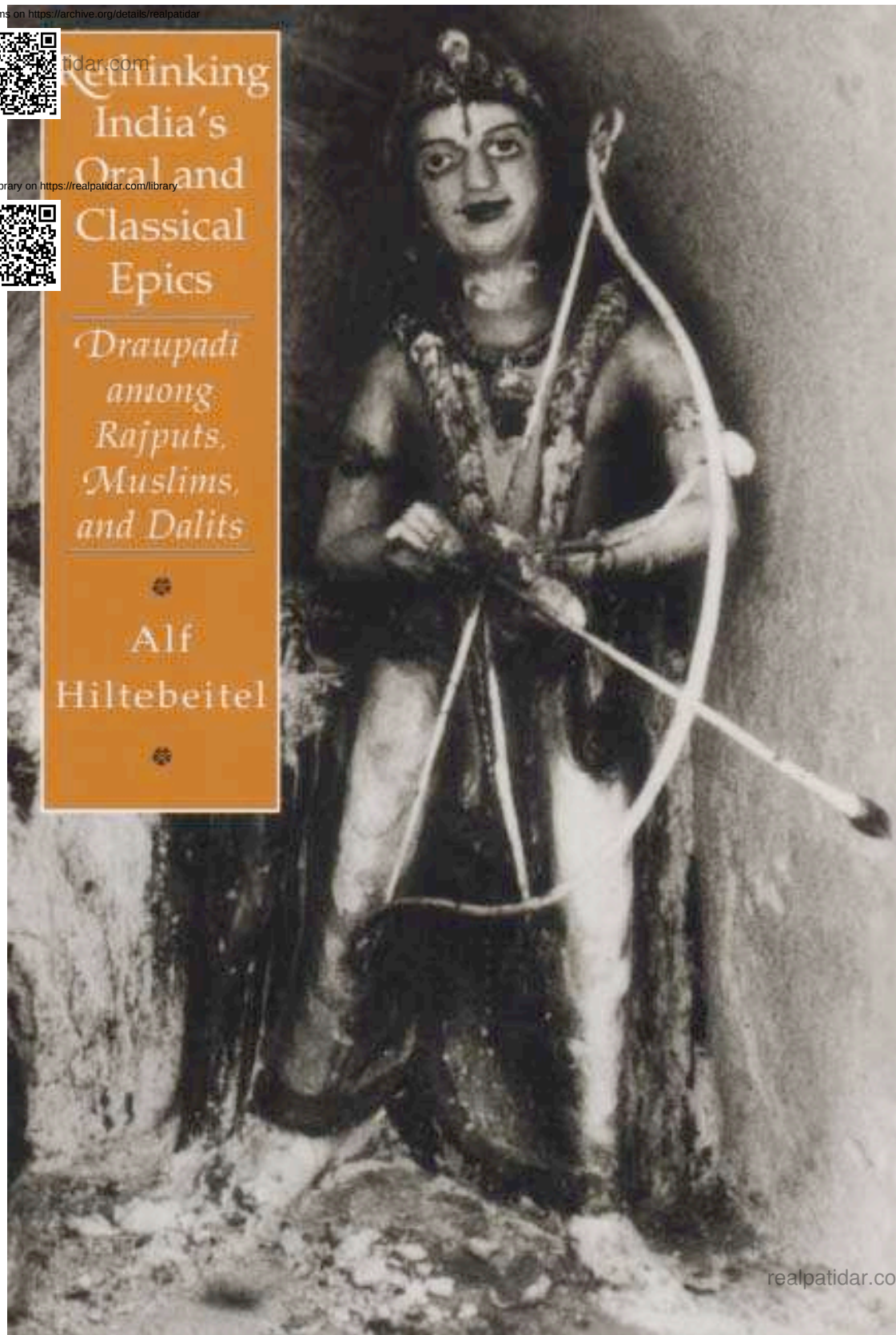


1999 -Rethinking Indias Oral and Classical Epics -Relevant Pages (1097)

All Items on <https://archive.org/details/realpatidar>



Full Library on <https://realpatidar.com/library>





Real Patidar Library

<https://www.realpatidar.com/library>

This book/literature/article/material may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The library does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The library shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.realpatidar.com>

About Real Patidar books

Real Patidar's mission is to organize the information on Satpanth religion, which is a Nizari Ismaili sect of Shia branch of Islam, and to make it universally accessible and useful. Real Patidar Books helps readers discover the material on Satpanth online while helping authors and researchers in their studies. You can know more by visiting <http://www.realpatidar.com>

You can resize and move this box in any PDF Application like Adobe Acrobat Reader.

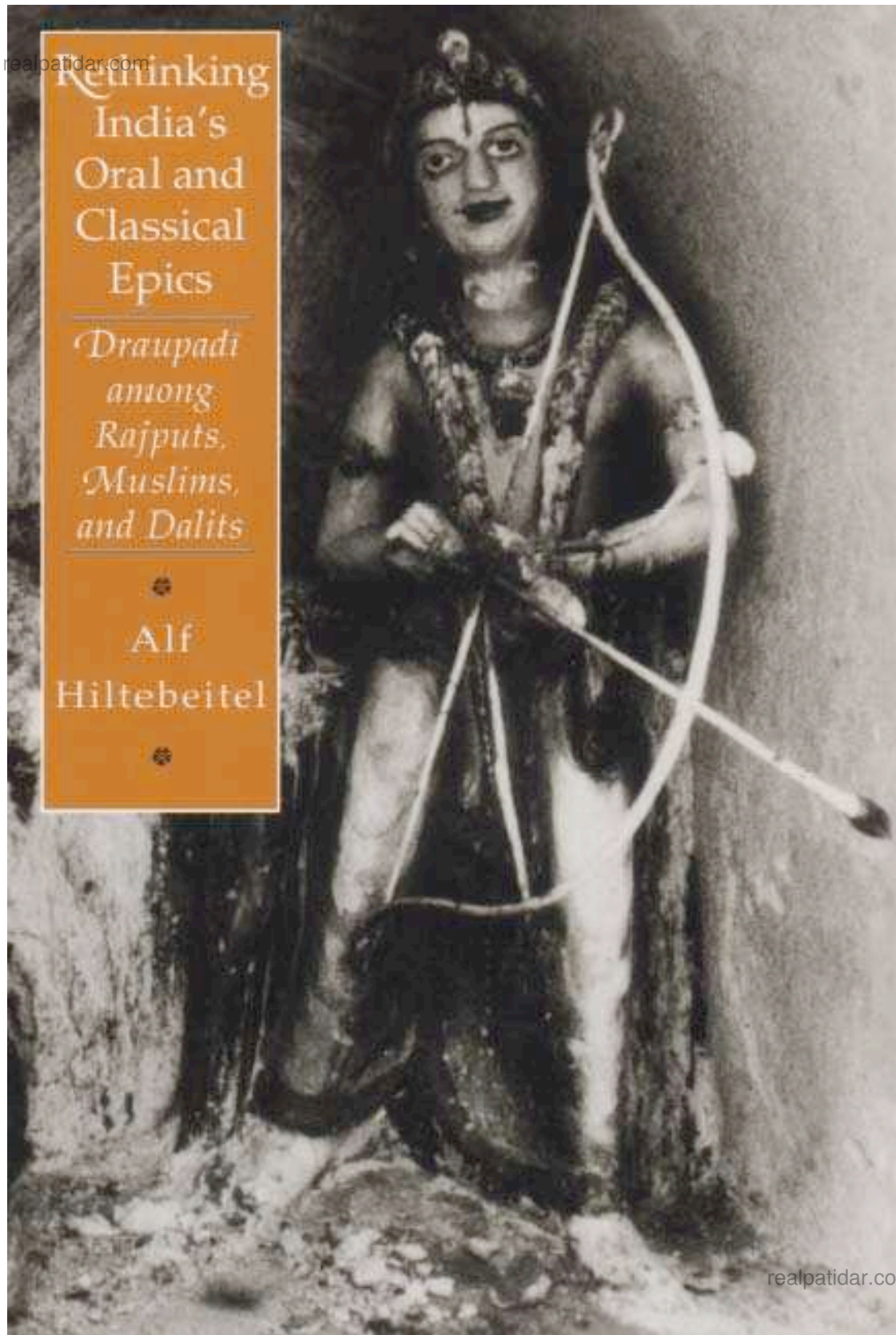
Use the Bookmarks facility in the PDF to directly go to the pages containing Highlights.

For Reference See Pages: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

For page numbers, see the page footer. Page numbers are in 'Page x of y' format

References by: RealPatidar.com - Created using: Create-D-File-Step2.pyw (v51)

Created on: 2026-04-11T18:05:57





2 Chapter One

Moreover, because that project began with the confrontation of classical and folk *Mahābhāratas*, it included branching comparative studies of certain Indian folk epics which seem, despite their telling different kinds of stories, to be related to a folk *Mahābhārata* that has much in common with the Draupadī cult *Mahābhārata*. Still attempting to keep the “retrospective” and “Draupadī cult” studies together, I thus began to announce the third volume under a second subtitle: “Rethinking India’s epics.” But a closing volume on the Draupadī cult should be more focused on the cult itself than is possible in a study that considers the cult a reference point for questions about epic. Moreover, the “rethinking” project grew and required a new format. Material written under this impulse mainly about the *Mahābhārata* will now form another book: *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A reader’s guide to the education of Yudhiṣṭhira*. The present book was written in tandem with that one (referred to in the Bibliography as “forthcoming”). The third volume of *The cult of Draupadī* will thus be redefined again, and what I now intend is a book that will look at changes in the Draupadī cult over the years I have studied it, and consider the project of “writing about goddesses” that has become no less a fashion in current cultural and feminist studies (see Erndl and Hildebeitel forthcoming) than it was in classical and medieval India. Nonetheless, Draupadī remains very much a force in this book and in *The education of Yudhiṣṭhira*.

This book argues that to understand how the Draupadī cult *Mahābhārata* and regional martial oral epics rethink India’s classical epics, one must explore Rajput culture, and, as the study develops, Rajput-Muslim cultures, as lending a major impetus to these rethinking projects. I will often pare this general interface down by using the phrase “Rajput-Afghan culture,” though not with any strict attempt to hold this usage to what is usually meant by either Rajput or Afghan separately. At other points, **South Asian Nizārī or Satpanth Ismā’īlī Shī’ism** will be the central Muslim configuration to consider. The argument will proceed first by analogy, marking out similarities and differences between the ways the Draupadī cult *Mahābhārata* and certain regional oral epics rethink India’s classical epics. Yet, as the argument develops, we will observe that the Draupadī cult *Mahābhārata* and the *Mahābhāratas* that are reenplotted in regional oral martial epics also have significant things in common that neither of them shares with the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. And indeed, we will also notice a similar relation between the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* and a

a suppressed Shī’ite tradition (42-47, 139, 258-60). See also J. D. Smith 1990 and n.d. on another Rajasthani folk *Mbh*; Sax (cited articles) on Pāṇḍav Līlā; Flueckiger 1996, 156-76 on the Chhattisgarhi *Paṇḍavānī*; and chap. 10, n. 3, and chap. 13 below on works by Zoller and others.



popular *Rāmāyaṇa* reenplotted into a regional oral epic in which the popular *Rāmāyaṇa* is akin to the reenplotted popular *Mahābhāratas*. We will thus have to ask whether the features such regionalized *Mahābhāratas* and *Rāmāyaṇas* appear to hold in common—and note, it is not a question of the Sanskrit epics themselves but of regional and vernacular reworkings of them—have a history. To answer this, the comparisons will be carried out with an eye to the possibility of missions, migrations, and modes of transmission and diffusion.

As the argument advances, so, it is hoped, does a richer understanding of South Asian regional oral martial epics, and of India's classical epics at least in terms of what regional oral martial epics make of them. In thinking through the historical relation between the classical epics and Rajput culture, I have found C. V. Vaidya a clever pathfinder. Although his historiography is often hopeless,⁴ he is the only scholar I know of to write extensively about both the classical Sanskrit epics (n.d. and 1966; [1906] 1972; 1907) and Rajputs (1924, 1926), to see interesting things in their relationship, and to see the relationship as an important problem.⁵

As to Rajputs and Muslims, I start from Kolff's insistence (1990, 1995) that prior to the "new Rajput Great Tradition" of sixteenth-century Rajasthan, there was an older, lower status medieval Rajput culture of soldiering with Afghans: one that *Ālhā* in particular recalls. Both soldiering and sects are part of this study, and in the latter case, Kassam's and Khan's writings on the Nizārī or Satpanth Ismā'īlīs, also called Khojās, have been especially eye-opening: Kassam (1994, 1995) for a largely persuasive historical reading of the double Hindu and Muslim registers found in the narratives and teachings of Satpanth songs called *gināns*, and her beautiful translation of the *gināns* of Pīr Shams; Khan (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b) with regard to the impact of these double registers, especially as they intertwine with Nizārī messianism, on low status Rajputs and Dalits (I see no reason not to start using the term Dalit in scholarly writing for so-called "former Untouchables"). To be sure, Afghans and Nizārīs must ordinarily be thought of separately. Nizārī missions penetrated India mainly through Sind, and had less success in Afghanistan. Moreover, whereas Afghans constantly interact with Rajputs in the soldiering sphere, Nizārīs, once their history is detached from the militant Ismā'īlism of the Persian Alamūt period,⁶ tend, after experiencing massacres and persecutions, to "seek camouflage and sanctuary" and to "find inconspicuous ways by which to survive" (Kassam 1995, 71-72). Yet some Afghans did bring

⁴See MacLean 1989, 26; Chattopadhyaya 1994, 161.

⁵See further Hildebeitel in press-g.

⁶The Alamūt fort fell to the Mongols in 1256 A.D.



Accordingly, while there is some explanatory power in a multi- to single-story model, it is best to admit that one can posit nothing comparable to the Bow Song or the Tulu pāddana at the source of the Sanskrit epics. Of course the Sanskrit epics draw on multistory traditions, and so, no doubt, do all epics, whether oral or written. But then, as Haroun Khalifa discovered on the moon Kahani, so do all stories.⁶⁸

D. Bhakti, Regionality, and the Goddess

One thing that distinguishes our main group of regional martial oral epics and related hero cults (and the Draupadī cult and its folk *Mahābhārata*) is the period of their early development, on which there is basic consensus that they all came into being from the twelfth to fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.⁶⁹ The twelfth century is also the period to which Pollock (1993) traces the incorporation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into the political imaginary of medieval India.

It is safe to say that oral epics of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries registered the impact of Islam and that all are influenced by the “bhakti movement.” But it is not enough to think of the bhakti movement that emerges into sectarian and “popular” vernacular forms from the time of the Aṭvārs, Nāyanārs, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. On the one hand, one must look to earlier bhakti sources in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* themselves, because that is precisely what is done when the classical epics are rethought in regional martial oral epic terms. On the other hand, one must also consider the relation of the bhakti movement’s more normative strains, generally, to more hybrid movements like the Sants, Nāths, and **Satpanth Ismā’īlīs**.

But to start from bhakti as it figures centrally amid these component factors, such a background leads to questions about regionality and the goddess. Regional epics show special intensifications of their heroines’ and goddesses’ links with regional land. If, for instance, both Draupadī and Sītā are born in the classical epics from the earth, and represent aspects of its prosperity, neither has the intensified association with a

“cults” of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa may have developed like those of oral epic heroes (49, n. 89) — that of “death and deification of local heroes” (51); *bhūtas* as “deified dead” “just one step removed from the status of deities proper” (53); and the exceptionalism of *Ālhā* whose heroes “do not die in battle” (53). Nagy even posits a “peculiarly Indian” “semantic shift from hero to god” to account for Greek differences (49); but both cultures have both distinctions and fluidities in the hero/god relation. More positively, Nagy makes it clear that he is against “monogenetic theories” (61, n. 151).

⁶⁸Rushdie 1990; cf. Irwin 1995, 63-102.

⁶⁹Late twelfth for *Ālhā* (Schomer 1989, 142) and *Palnādu* (Roghair, 80-81), early fourteenth for *Pābūjī* (Smith 1991, 78), twelfth to mid-fifteenth for *Elder brothers* (Beck 1978, 171; 1982, 27-29), and so on (Schomer, *ibid.*). Such datings will be discussed further.



and it would be a mistake to exaggerate it, it is for imagining worlds split off not only temporally from the transparencies of their reimagined classical pasts, but geographically and politically from the imperial centers of mainly Sunnī Muslim rule. It is here that we may consider ways in which the political life of India's regional oral martial epics overlaps, between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, with that of the *Satpanth Ismā'ilīs*. For, as we shall see, drawing on their own early ties with oppressed populations and their recurring resistances to imperial politics,⁹⁵ *Nizārī Ismā'ilīs* in India developed their own new discordant and harmonizing manner of relating Indian epic and purānic stories in accord with their theology of *taqiyya* or "precautionary dissimulation."⁹⁶ It is such simmering strategies as these that leave regional oral martial epics to appear and sometimes be countercultural, non-Brahmanical, and anti-imperial at the same time that they draw from primary sources of the cultural mainstream—not only as they were fashioned in medieval times, but as they have continued to be told through periods of colonial and post-Independence national rule.

⁹⁵See Daftary 1990, 52-64, 123-25, 254-55, 261-62 on early proto-*Ismā'ilī* associations with oppressed and peripheralized populations; on their varied resistances to imperial politics, see 306 (persecuted by the Mughal Aurangzīb), 340-52 and 418-28 (opposing the Saljūks and Mongols from Alamūt), 404 (Ghurids), 452 (Timurids), 472 (Safawids).

⁹⁶Kassam 1995; Khan 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Daftary 1990, 566.



their formative developments. Such oral hero tales would seem to have circulated through the earliest form of what Kolff calls the “Hindustani military labor market.”¹³ Yet even earlier than this, from 1010 when Mahmud of Ghazna in his pro-Abbasid Sunnī fervor destroyed Hindu kingdoms and temples and sought to expunge the Ismā’īlīs of Multan, and especially soon thereafter, from 1051 to 1160, when Ismā’īlīs were able to regroup, Nizārī Ismā’īlīs Indianized their missions with already-destabilized Rajputs among their converts. This span, which Kassam calls the “seeding period” of the Satpanth and describes as the “crucible in which the social basis of an indigenous Ismā’īlī community was forged through intermarriages, political alliances, and a common cause requiring mutual trust and material support” with Rajputs and other Hindus, was begun with the recapture of lower Sind by the Ismā’īlī-influenced Sūmrah kings, noted for continuing some Hindu practices, and ended with renewed massacres of the Ismā’īlīs in Multan by the Ghurids in 1160 and 1175—the latter under Shihāb al-Dīn, the eventual conqueror of Prithīrāj Chauhān.¹⁴ As we shall see, one of the things forged in the continuation and aftermath of this period was an underground Ismā’īlī folk *Mahābhārata*.

Bundela Rajputs are among those who emerge on the scene in these times, arriving in Bundelkhand “as early as the thirteenth century” and more concentratedly in the fourteenth, when they displace and replace the defeated Chandēls.¹⁵ They arrive allegedly as a branch of Gaharwars from Banaras, which, let us note, is the home, at the beginning of *Ālhā*, of the Saiyid of Banaras, Mīrā Tālhan, and his eighteen sons. While *Ālhā* is not primarily “their story,” it is natural and I think safe to hypothesize that it was the Bundela variant of this early type of Rajput culture that provided the regional Rajput milieu in which the fall of the Mahobā Chandēls, Delhi Chauhāns, and “Rāthors” of Kanauj was reimagined in the distinctive way that took shape as *Ālhā*. Moreover, if Jaiswal is right that “the best specimens of written Bundeli are extant in the bardic songs of Ālhā written, or preserved, largely in Banāphari,” which he describes

Seeding Period of Satpanth till the time indigenous Ismaili community was formed

links and opposition to the last Chauhān king of Delhi make obvious parallels. On “Ahirs and other Rajputising peasants and pastoralists,” see Kolff 1990, 74.

¹³Alavi criticizes Kolff for “the simplicity and ease of sale and purchase which the word market seems to convey” (1995, 56, n. 1), but I do not think it oversimplifies matters in *Ālhā*, where heroes define loyalties by those who provide their salt. Especially strong recruiting was carried out among the armed peasantry of areas steeped in *Ālhā*, the “extremely popular song” that, according to Kolff, “more than any other epic, reflects the heroic service traditions of Hindustan” (1990, 170; cf. 119).

¹⁴Kassam 1995, 121 (quote), 47-48, 57-94, 120-21; Khan 1997b, 39-106. Recall the doubled Ismā’īlī and Rajput traditions of Shihāb al-Dīn’s blinding (chap. 8 at n. 38).

¹⁵Kolff 1990, 121; cf. Luard 1907, 13-15.



326 Chapter Ten

of the khejari tree neutralizes the blood-letting of war in a post-war setting to show that those whose blood is now mixed in heaven can still remind us of peace on earth.

Rajputs and Afghans thus both had (or imparted) egalitarian ideals, which must be one of the reasons they so readily intermingled. Bundela Rajputs in particular have some special tendencies of this sort. Their participation in the “three branch” division noted in section A, which marks their status as inferior to the “thirty-six branch” division of “Western Rajput” clans, shows, unlike the latter, “no tendency for internal hierarchical segmentation” (Jain 1975, 262-63). The term *kuri*, implying a “sprout” or branching relationship, is used by Bundelas to designate the segmentation of both the eastern and western clan-clusters from one apical ancestor (244-46). Bundelas also forged regional ties of “pseudo-agnation” through a so-called “line of milk” or “milk brotherhood” with Ahirs, whose men formed their militias, and whose women provided their princes with wet-nurses (267-68). The *Chatra Prakāś* describes the Bundelas’ endless string of battles against “Ufghans,” most celebrated of whom was the aforementioned Duleel Khan, in whom the Rajputs saw a son and brother.⁸³ Chatrasal’s early warband of thirty warriors, reminiscent of the multicaste brothers in *Palnādu*, consisted of several Brahmans and Rajputs, a barber, a fisherman, and a Muslim.⁸⁴ Whether Afghans and Rajputs interdined, however, is a matter on which our oral epics and other sources are silent.

Yet hero cults repeat this impulse, as can be discerned in Khan’s studies of the cult of Rāmdeo in Marwar (the Jodhpur area of west-central Rajasthan). As was mentioned in chapter 1, it is with the cult of Rāmdeo, also called Ramshāh Pīr, that we widen the question of Ismā’īlī influences. Rāmdeo’s worshipers sometimes identify their sect as the Satpanth, but also have such other names as Mahāpanth and Nizārpanth or Nizārī Dharm, the last two being secret names.⁸⁵ Rāmdeo’s paired names are illustrative of the sect’s double register of Hindu and Ismā’īlī features. As

Secret Names of Satpanth

⁸³See n. 7 on the *Chatra Prakāś*. Many such “Ufghans” or Afghans were sent by the Mughals, others by Muhammad Khan Bangash, and some locally entrenched in Bundelkhand.

⁸⁴Later joined by Gond tribesmen, Baniyas, a Chhipi (dyer), Ahir, and more Muslims (Gupta 1980, 25, n. 33, 28, 130; Kolff 1990, 151). But Bundelas also seized upon Rajput prerogatives to lord it over the “non-Aryan” Khangar populations they conquered (Jain 1975, 266-70).

⁸⁵Khan 1996, 33; 1997b, 67-68. Similarly, Shāh Nizār is a name—the only one said to be secretly disclosed in the gināns of Shams Pīr—of the messianic Qā’im (Kassam 1995, 327), presumably keeping secret his identification with the Imāms of Alamūt, the Nizārī stronghold. Another name for the sect is Guptīs “(lit. secret)—a designation . . . for all Nizaris practicing *taqīyya* and hiding their real identity” (Khan 1997b, 41).



Khan remarks, his sectarian following is one of a small number of “‘obscure’ religious movements” among the “‘forgotten branches’ of Ismailism in Rajasthan,” but also “found in neighboring areas, such as Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab,” that share a genre of messianic “prophetic songs,” sung at night vigils, called “poems of the time to come” (*Āgam vāṇīs*). These songs are themselves folk variants of the *gināns*, the “songs of ‘wisdom’” (from Sanskrit *jñāna*) of the early Satpanth or Khojā Pīrs. They are known from manuscripts going back to the eighteenth century, but the earliest are probably composed by at least the fourteenth century with some of them (notably including those attributed to Shams Pīr) having still prior oral transmission.⁸⁶

While the *Āgam vāṇīs* have a secretive character, those who organize the Rāmdeo vigils at which they are sung include “ascetics of a religious mendicant order (*bhekh*)” called Kāmads, who sing other songs about Rāmdeo more publicly (Khan 1993, 40; 1996, 33). Drawn mainly from Dalit communities, and especially the Meghwāl (or Meghval), and in some areas Bhīl tribals, Kāmads are the usual priests at a network of cult centers or seats (*gaddī*) that link Rāmdeo with other figures. In her beautifully researched description of this network, Khan reconstructs fragments of oral epic, and a history traceable over three generations from the first half of the fourteenth to the early fifteenth century, behind this extraordinary “little king” Rajput missionary-hero.

Rāmdeo’s grandfather is Raṇsī Tanwar, a Tomara (Tanwar) Rajput alleged to have lost the throne of Delhi to a Sunnī Sultan (Khan 1996, 38), and also a descendant of Arjuna and an ardent devotee of Kṛṣṇa (1993, 38-39). He and a Meghwāl Dalit named Khiwan are converted by a Nizārī missionary: the above-named Shams Pīr, also known to Rāmdeo’s followers as Samas Rishi, who comes from Iran (presumably Alamūt). Historical reconstructions vary. According to Kassam, one can infer from the *gināns* attributed to Shams Pīr, and from other sources, that he worked as a missionary of the Ismā’īlī *da’wa* directed from Alamūt up to its fall to the Mongols in 1256, and indigenized his mission thereafter to close out what must have been a very long career (according to the genealogy preserved on his tomb, he was born in Ghazna in 1165 and was buried in Ucch in 1277).⁸⁷ Khan, drawing on stories connecting Shams Pīr with Raṇsī Tanwar and Khiwan in the Rāmdeo cycle, settles on the early fourteenth century as the time Shams comes to Multan, during which he would have kept concealment first from the Mongols until 1306, and from the anti-Shī’a policies of Allauddin Khilji, the Delhi sultan whose reign (1296-1316) established imperial sway as far south as

⁸⁶Khan 1997a; 1997b, 45, 155-57; Shackle and Moir 1992, 15.

⁸⁷Kassam 1995, 84 and 93; cf. 77, 90, 114-15; Nanji 1978, 63.



328 Chapter Ten

Madurai, and no doubt did much to sow seeds for common Hindu and Muslim forms of resistance to it (1997b, 69-75). Kassam's dating seems to make sense from the literary sources, leaving it likely that the links with the Rāmdeo tradition's folklore would have grown around the Pīr's developing hagiography.

Rāmdeo's followers further identify Shams Pīr/Samas Rishi as an indirect spiritual disciple of a probably Nāth-inspired guru named Gusāinjī, who is also identified as the formless god ("*Alakh, Nirānjan, Nirākār*, etc.") and the sect's primal guru (*ādi guru*). Shams preached primarily to Hindus (including obviously Rajputs) and Muslims; Gusāinjī to Hindus and Dalits "who could not receive initiation from 'higher caste' gurus" (34, 41-43). Raṇsī Tanwar and Khiwan establish cult centers and become Pīrs through Shams Pīr's initiation; but they also become martyrs through his curse, and through the persecution of the unnamed Sunnī emperor of Delhi—possibly the just mentioned Alauddin Khiljī—who orders them "cut with a magic saw consisting of a margosa leaf."⁸⁸ Raṇsī's lineage is one of "high-caste Rajputs," but at a small-scale (little king) local level. Narainā, the cult center Raṇsī founds as a missionary of Shams Pīr's teachings, is also considered his jāgīr: a precarious one, since most of his sons die trying to defend it against the Sunnī emperor. The two surviving sons, one of them Ajmal, Rāmdeo's father, flee to Marwar, abandoning Narainā to be administered for some time by Dalit Meghwāls, descendants of Khiwan.⁸⁹ Rāmdeo, who is considered along with Pābūjī as one of the five Pīrs of Rajasthani folk culture,⁹⁰ then inherits an area in Marwar which his father had cleared of Rākṣas, and establishes a "small kingdom there" that "was in fact a *jagīr* granted by the local [Rāthor] ruler." But he settles nearby at Runichā-Rāmdeorā, his cult center, and the jāgīr reverts to the Rāthor.⁹¹ Despite its fragmentation, it is another loser's epic of mobile "little Rajput" resistance to imperial power in Delhi, this time with the Muslim, Rajput, and Dalit partners all being Nizārīs.

The Nizārī connection has dimmed and been largely forgotten over

⁸⁸As Khan has detected (1996, 38-39; 1997b, 72), the "saw of punishment" seems to have been a "specific torture" used by to punish Ismā'īlīs. Their bones become flowers (collected cremation bones are called flowers; Weinberger-Thomas 1996, 85), their blood becomes milk.

⁸⁹Khan 1996, 38, 42. The present custodians are Rajputs, though not Tanwar-Tomaras.

⁹⁰Joining Harbu, Gogā, and Mallināth or Mehā, although others may be included in very different lists, including Ghāzī Miyān, as mentioned below. At one temple a painting of the Five Pīrs complements one of the five Pāṇḍavas, apparently connecting the folk heroes with the classical heroes by a Nizārī "system of correspondences" rather than a Hindu pattern of reincarnations (Khan 1996, 48).

⁹¹Khan 1996, 34-35, 38-44; 1997b, 69-80.



time. Cult centers founded or administered by Dalits have attracted only Dalits. Only those founded by Rajputs open “little kingdom” umbrellas for multiple castes. Rāmdeo, “derisively nick-named *dhedhō kā dev* (the ‘god of the pariahs’),” now attracts all castes at his (Khan 1997b, 62), while at the Mīyālā center founded by his paternal uncle Dhanrāj Pīr, one finds among “traditional worshipers . . . not only Meghwāl and Regar but Mālī, Jain, Bhīl and a good number of Mer (Rāwat)” (1996, 43; cf. 1997b, 80-82, 117-18). The devotees are thus variously Dalit, low, and tribal, plus the religiously “dialogic” Muslim/Hindu Mers or Meos, and the Jains.⁹² Since the 1920s, there have been attempts to “rehinduize” them all. But the forgotten Nizārī impulses are still traceable in ritual and myth. At Rāmdeo’s cult center at Runichā-Rāmdeorā, “as a whole, the configuration is that of a *kabristān* or Muslim cemetery, somewhat altered to meet the basic requirements of a Hindu temple,” with both Hindu and Muslim features on the graves of Rāmdeo, his parents, sons, disciples, last descendant, and Dalit adoptive sister.⁹³ Temple and battlefield terrains that include shrines for Muslims remind one of the hero cults of *Ālhā*, *Palnādu*, and the Draupadī cult *Mahābhārata*. We shall find something similar in connection with the ballad of Rāja Desing.

Moreover, in the “poems of the time to come,” “Hindu and Turks will drink from the same cup” (1997a, 418), and God—that is, Rāmdeo, understood as Kalkī and the Nikalank (faultless) avatār, and bearing various Muslim messianic titles—will return to marry a Dalit girl named Meghṛī (or Meghṛī Rāṇī), symbolizing “the Megh or Meghval community . . . and, as such, all the oppressed people who will triumph and be redeemed at the end of the Kali Yuga” (1997a, 417). As anticipated by the pāval or *ghatpāt* ritual, which, under Nizārī influence, took root among little Rajput and Dalit communities of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, and which consisted of a shared cup and tantric meal open to all castes including Dalits,⁹⁴ brotherhood (and also it seems sisterhood⁹⁵)

⁹²Mayaram 1997, 64-71. See chap. 8, n. 43, on Mayaram’s use of “dialogic” to discuss the Meos, to whom she also ascribes Shī’ī subcurrents (60, 256-60). Cf. Khan 1996, 37, 50-56, and 1997b, 159, 225-26, 269-70, offering fine critical discussion of rehinduization, incomplete conversion, syncretism, dissidence, folk spontaneity, deislamicization, sanskritization, etc., as interpretative strategies. Cf. Mayaram 1997, 45.

⁹³Khan 1996, 44; 1997b, 62-63.

⁹⁴*Pāval* (with several variants) is the sacred drink taken at the *ghatpāt* (lit. “pot-throne,” the throne being a wooden plank) ceremony; see Khan 1994; 1997b, 53-54, 127-37, 143-44, 159, 179-80, 194-99, 210-16, 245-46; Nanji 1988, 66-67; Shackle and Moir 1992, 13; Kassam 1995, 105-12, 266-67, 320-70. Srivastava explains Rāmdeo’s “popularity among lower castes . . . primarily by his mission of human equality” (1997, 65).

⁹⁵Gināns attributed to Shams that describe the Nizārī origins of the ritual in the circular *garbī* dances affirm gender equality: “Man and woman are one and the same though their bodies are distinct; those on the path of religion (*dharma*) are equal”; “regard all others as

Paval / पलवल



330 Chapter Ten

comes with the apocalypse.

Indeed, the theme is rich, and has been disseminated among other Dalit and low status populations.⁹⁶ A closely related sectarian group of similar history and profile—the Bishnoī—also sings “poems of the time to come” that call the bride Vasudhā Kunvārī, “the Virgin Earth.” Khan traces this second name along with the bride’s messianic story to the *gināns*, which include songs with “war-like and eschatological themes” that we must look at more closely. The Nizārī inspiration itself also draws the folklore of the Shī’ī martyrdoms of Karbalā, which are recalled on the fifth or seventh day of Muharram. These center on the unconsummated wedding of Qasim, the young son of the earlier-slain Hasan, to Ḥusayn’s daughter Fatemeh (or Sakīnah [Gaborieau 1975, 296]), in which all the parties, but especially the young bride and groom, accept that when the wedding music changes to the drums of war, the groom will march to his death. In Iran, there is a beautiful *ta’ziyeh* or passion play on this theme (Humayuni 1979). In north India and Nepal, such a story also becomes part of the martyrdom legend of Ghāzī Miyān, known too as Bālā Pīr (Youthful Pīr) but born as Sālār Mas’ūd. Son of the eleventh-century Mahmud of Ghazna’s sister, he gets linked as well with the late twelfth-century Prithīrāj Chauhān (Elliot 1879, 251-53). Slain in 1033 as a youth of nineteen on a raiding expedition at Bahraich (a hundred kilometers northeast of Lucknow in eastern Uttar Pradesh), he has a tomb there by the thirteenth century where he comes to be worshiped, as he also does elsewhere from Bengal to Rajasthan (Schwerin 1981, 149). Now a warrior (*ghāzī*)-martyr with a new marriage story (Gaborieau 1975, 295), he is worshiped as one of the five Pīrs by *both* Hindus and Muslims (Schwerin 1981, 151-53). The fair at Bahraich that commemorates his death in battle, vastly attended in the nineteenth century (Elliot 1879, 252) as it still is today (Schwerin 1981, 149), is called “Nuptials (*Urs*) of Ghāzī Miyān,” and recalls that the nineteen-year-old hero “had on his bridal clothes, and was about to be married, when he was martyred” (Elliot 1879, 252). In Nepal, his *urs* is celebrated, down to the change from wedding music to war music and the lamentation songs (*marsiya*) that follow, by recalling him as *both* Ḥasan and Ḥusayn in a

⁹⁶Khan 1997a, 413; 1996, 49, n. 73. Cf. 1997b, 143: the *Kāyam rāi* will marry a Mahar girl among the Berars of Madhya Pradesh; 149, in a Meghwal *bhajan* song of recognition: “Wake up, O Meghri, recognize your fiancée”; 157-58, in the same song, Meghri has already been chosen in the first yuga; 181; 119, a *vānī* song: “The wedding altar will be at Chittor, the bridegroom’s party will establish its camp at Delhi,” implying eternal empire. On Rāmdev or the last avatar as emperor, see Khan 1997b, 80, 148, 230, and 248 (similarly for last Sikh guru). Cf. Shackleton and Moir 1992, 97-98, 176-77; and Khan 1996, 49, n. 73, with the verse, “In the four ages I have wandered in countless forms, but no marriage has taken place. Have the wedding performed, o my Master. Be gracious, o miraculous lord.”



single unconsummated marriage with Ghāzī Miyān's own bride Bibī Joharā, "daughter of Sayyid" (Gaborieau 1975, 289-97). In north India, Ghāzī Miyān is especially popular among the "dialogic" Meos, some of whom claim he converted them to Islam (Schwerin 1981, 144, 152). His worship as one of the five Pīrs is also popular among "lower caste Hindus (Doms, Nats, Mirasis) and those converted from lower castes to Islam (Lal Begis, Julahas)" (154). Moreover, "[s]ome subcastes of the [Dalit] Doms identify Lal Beg with Ghazi Miyan" (155). Khan numbers the Lāl Begis among the "'lost branches' of the Ismailis" (1997b, 271), and notes that Lāl Beg is worshiped in Nizārī-inspired traditions by these same populations, known also as Chuhrās, who overlap with Meghs and other Dalit groups of the former Northwest Provinces and Punjab (155-57). Hindu Bhangīs (sweepers) know him as "Lāl Guru, which is the familiar name of the Rākshasa Aronākarat" (Elliot 1879, 32). Mainly known as Bālā Shāh (Youthful King), Lāl Beg is the disciple of Bālmīk (Vālmīki) and the messianic avatar. In an *Āgam vāñī*-like song, he is the "true saint and prophet," "the male buffalo," and leader of an eschatological army he inspires among the living, and also resurrects, even from "the burnt dead."⁹⁷ The "vat" or the "pitcher and cup" come with him through the yugas. He is "Nīkāhil" and 'Alī who "equipped his Duldul," and he holds "the bow from Multān" (Rose 1911-19, 1:182-83, 192, 199-205, especially 200-3). Yet we are not told whether, like so many of his counterparts just mentioned, he has a messianic bride.

Then too, one must reconsider elements of the Lausen epic of West Bengal, whose hero makes the sun rise in the west on a new moon night, has an army of Dalit Dom retainers whom Dharma resurrects from the dead, and whose cult includes a fermented rice wine jug distributed, like the ghatpāt, at new moon vigils.⁹⁸ In the "big" *Dasa avatāra* ginān of the Imāmshāhī branch of the Satpanth,⁹⁹ the last of the good or auspicious signs of the Nikalank avatar's "open" (i.e., nonsecret) arrival at the end of the Kali yuga is, "And the sun will rise in the west" (Khakee 1972, 182). One of Šadrūddīn's gināns also identifies the "Lord of Alamut" as "Lord Ali in the West" and "glorious as a risen sun" (Shackle and Moir 1992, 87-89), while one of Sham Pīr's gināns tells

⁹⁷The Shāh (see n. 85) burns the sinner's body to ashes, then sprinkles pāval to make one sit up (Khakee 1972, 440)—this, according to the "big" *Dasa avatāra* ginān of the Imāmshāhīs who split from the Nizārīs, but attributed to Imām Shāh and considered his elaboration (for the sect founded shortly after 1513 by his son) of earlier short *Dasa avatāra* gināns attributed to Shams Pīr and his grandson Šadrūddīn (Khakee 1972, 5-6; Daftary 1990, 484). Though formerly important, due to islamizing reforms it is no longer used in Khojā services (ibid., 485).

⁹⁸See Hildebeitel 1991a, 302-8; cf. Khan 1997b, 198; Nanji 1988, 66.

⁹⁹See above n. 97.



340 Chapter Ten

known by Muslim names: Isuf, Alladin, Dal Khoja and Makkardin, Fatima”—as Khan notes, including “at least” one Khojā.¹²⁵

These themes all trace back to the Khojās and their *gināns*: in particular those attributed to Shams Pīr, who is pivotal not only for the Rāmdeo cult, but in the formation of the Satpanth. As Kassam argues, the *gināns* of Shams Pīr—and this is so whether or not the songs are precisely his (Khan 1997b, 45)—reflect upon the crucial transformation of Nizārī missions in India. Following upon the “seeding period” of alliances with Rajputs and other Hindus that ended with the first Ghurid massacre of Ismā’īlīs in Multan in 1160,¹²⁶ this transformative period included three momentous events for Ismā’īlīs in Sind: Ḥasan II’s declaration of the *Qiyāmah* or Resurrection from a pulpit at Alamūt in 1162; the second Ghurid massacre of Ismā’īlīs in Multan by Shihāb al-Dīn in 1175; and the destruction of Alamūt in 1256. It is enough to say here that when Ḥasan II, the fourth lord of Alamūt and the first to declare himself Imām, announced the *Qiyāmah*, his declaration, to quote a fine passage from Kassam, “spiritualized an aspiration that for centuries had been materially sought. It created an opening, a window in the space of which religious forms were represented as fluid signs.”¹²⁷ If Shams Pīr’s dates as a missionary from Alamūt carry at least through the end of the long lifetime (1165-1277) ascribed to him on his tomb,¹²⁸ his *gināns* would reflect (or reflect back) on the spirit of the *Qiyāmah*, which was openly proclaimed from Alamūt under Ḥasan II and his successor Muhammad II up to 1212. This spirit, as Kassam says, “would have made” Shams Pīr’s “innovative articulation of Satpanth both possible and permissible.”¹²⁹

Meanwhile, as Kassam further suggests, the songs in which Shams Pīr predicts that the Shāh¹³⁰ will come from Alamūt to win the apocalyptic battle could well have been inspired while Alamūt Fort still stood, although they could also recall that period, since the *Qiyāmah*’s “realized eschatology” is, I believe, sufficient to explain the warfare themes. In arguing, however, that the messianic songs evoke some “high probability

¹²⁵Khan 1997a, 416-18, with discussion of the *Āgam vānīs* of the similar Bishnoi and Jasnāthi movements, which add such details as the horse being Duldul, who after having been Muhammad’s horse becomes the horse of ‘Alī; cf. Khan 1997b, 204, 217-18, and 1996, 416-17 and 1997b, 80, 150, 230, on Rāmdeo as “true emperor.”

¹²⁶See at n. 14 above.

¹²⁷Kassam 1995, 56-62 (61 quote); cf. Hodgson 1955, 148-84; Daftary 1990, 386-96, on these events and the *Qiyāmah* doctrine.

¹²⁸See at n. 87 above.

¹²⁹Kassam 1995, 115; “Satpanth tradition strictly maintains that the *gināns* were composed by Ismā’īlī pīrs who were authorized to do so by the imām” (90).

¹³⁰The “King,” as he usually calls ‘Alī as Imām and Qā’im.



of gaining back the region” of Sind through the “promise of reinforcements from Alamūt” (1995, 114), Kassam sustains a forced historical reading. She seems to forget that the post-Qiyāmah period from 1212 to the destruction of Alamūt in 1256 was for Nizārīs one of religious accommodation to Sunnī regimes and retreat from impracticable politics. And she overlooks the wider debilitating conditions in India that link the massacres of Ismā’īlīs in Multan with the establishment of Sunnī rule in Delhi.¹³¹ Though Shams Pīr’s apocalyptic gināns sustain a tension between an historical present and the throes of the time to come, the battle scenes are clearly messianic. What enlivens this apocalypse is the innovative transformation, made possible by the Qiyāmah, of “religious forms” into “fluid signs”—which, as Kassam reminds us elsewhere—afforded “camouflage and sanctuary” in times of taqīyya after massacres and persecutions.¹³² Like the more folkloric *Āgam vāṇīs* of the Nizār-panthīs and other lost sects of the Ismā’īlīs, Shams Pīr’s Khojā gināns sing of such fluidity in the Muslim-Hindu composition of the Shāh’s eschatological army.¹³³ One song in particular, for us a proof text, must be cited in extenso:

Yes sir! There the Swāmi Rājā mounts the horse Duldul.
He grants the believer (*mu’min*) his heart’s desire. . . .
Yes sir! There a nightingale sings, and a hammock swings;
The [army] rides before the wind. . . .
Yes sir! There in Yodhā is the brave bowholder Bhīma;
Fearless, all treasures are his.
Yes sir! There three hundred and thirty bowmen climb;
Arjuna’s army is endless.
Yes sir! There Sahadeva and Nakula are truly praiseworthy;
They destroy the mountain with their weapons. . . .
Yes Sir! There king Yudhiṣṭhira delivered ninety million;
Twelve [million] attained the Lord (*Khudāvand*).¹³⁴

¹³¹Kassam 1995, 99-100 [historicizing the story of Kalinga], 104-5 [“imminent help,” “actual battle scenes,” and “the impending arrival of the Shāh . . . who gives repeated assurances and pledges of military aid”], 114-15 [Alamūt as an “established power base” giving Ismā’īlīs “confidence” that they might regain power in Multan], 122 [the decades before the fall of Alamūt as “a time when the Nizārī Ismā’īlīs were still in power”].

¹³²Kassam 1995, 71-72; quoted in chap. 1.

¹³³Many features are paralleled and extended (as will be mentioned) in the presumably later “big” *Dasa avatāra* ginān (see above n. 97). Note that Khakee (1972, 41) says the latter “appears intellectually at an unphilosophical, unsophisticated, and folk-lorish level.”

¹³⁴This is the third of three verses which evoke the widely attested ginānic theme of souls saved through the four yugas: five crores by Prahlād, seven by Hariścandra, nine by Yudhiṣṭhira, and twelve by Pīr Sadrudḍīn.



realpatidar.com

342 Chapter Ten

Yes sir! There a countless million march in the Shāh's army;
Their endless limits cannot be fathomed.
Yes sir! There five hundred thousand came with Lord (*tīvar*)
Gorakha;
They all came blowing trumpets.
Yes sir! There seventy-thousand mounted with Ḥusayn;
The entire world was shaken with rumbling noise.
Yes sir! There about nine hundred million and fifty-six
Of the castes of Medhā and Damara found salvation.
Yes sir! There thirty-two million of the Kīnara caste ascended;
They all attained the shining Lord (*nara*). . . .
Yes sir! There former armies walk around the Shāh;
Six hundred and forty thousand attain union.
Yes sir! The Shāh advances four arm-lengths on his wooden slippers;
He slays the demon Kalinga.
Yes sir! There Queen Surjā¹³⁵ warns, "Listen Kālinga!
'Alī has come with a great army."
Yes sir! There comes 'Alī from the West to the East;
And Yodhā meets its end. . . .¹³⁶
Yes sir! There the Shāh has now become manifest in his tenth form;
He is known by the name and form (*rūpa*) of 'Alī. . . .
Yes sir! There before the world is the Shāh's sword Dhulfikār;
So brightly does the Light (*tejas*) of 'Alī shine forth.
Yes sir! There six thousand instruments will play for the Shāh;¹³⁷
'Alī will come on to the field. . . .
Yes sir! There, Pīr Shams says,
"Listen, O Gathering of believers (*mu'min*)!
You will have a vision (*dīdār*) of the Shah."
Yes sir! There Pīr Shams, the Qalandar¹³⁸ of 'Alī says:
The sky will thunder with the Shāh's countless weapons!
The Sāheb of innumerable wanderers will mount his horse.
And nothing will be able to arrest his speed. (Kassam 1995, 240-43)

¹³⁵Kalinga's queen, but converted to the Satpanth—according to the "big" *Dasa avatāra*, by Pīr Shams in the form of a parrot (Khakee 1972, 73-78).

¹³⁶From here, several verses describe the Shāh taking on Viṣṇu's avatars, up to the tenth.

¹³⁷Curiously, Kassam mentions that "*gīnān* recitation is not (presently) accompanied by any musical instruments," but indicates that this is likely the result of recent islamization (1995, 4, 126, n. 12). In the *Dasa avatāra*, the Shāh's army has many musicians (including Yoginīs and Dattātreyas beyond those mentioned here), and their instruments (drums, bells, *vīṇā*) are in effect weapons (Khakee 1972, 234, 252-53, 252, 266-68, 322).

¹³⁸"Wonder working . . . wild, ecstatic *ṣūfī*" (Kassam 1995, 82).

realpatidar.com



The Shāh is manifest in his luminosity as 'Alī,¹³⁹ of whom Shams's songs give vision (*dīdār*, and elsewhere *darśan*).¹⁴⁰ 'Alī Shāh mounts the riderless horse Duldul, the white mare of Muhammad, who "survived" Muhammad, "and according to Shī'ah tradition, was inherited by 'Alī" to be ridden in historical battles.¹⁴¹ Now Duldul waits to be remounted by the apocalyptic 'Alī, in whom Shams Pīr sees the reality behind the tenth avatar Kalki, who will also ride a white horse.¹⁴² Having sided with the Pāṇḍavas in the past, destroying the Kauravas by sending an army to what can only be Kurukṣetra,¹⁴³ 'Alī will now "come onto the field" with his army at Yodhā,¹⁴⁴ where the demon Kalinga dwells in his "crooked" Cīnab Fort (237)—probably another name for Multan.¹⁴⁵ 'Alī's spectral army of "countless millions" rides before the wind, uniting resurrected armies of the past: "former armies" that "walk around the Shāh"—including not only the Pāṇḍavas' vast hosts, but the companions of Ḥusayn from Karbalā, now increased ten

¹³⁹"The Imāms are from Light; they are ever-present (*qā'im*) in the world" (Kassam 1995, 327). See further below.

¹⁴⁰"O Brother, realize the true vision (*darśan*) of your Shāh Pīr!" "When the vision (*darśan*) of 'Alī Shāh is attained, the mind will frolic in joy" (Kassam 1995, 238, 247; on *dīdār*, cf. 190, 214, 223, 306, 358).

¹⁴¹Kassam 1995, 390; see n. 125 above. According to Khakee, **Duldul is originally a mule, but in Satpanth texts a horse** (1972, 44, 225; cf. 224-28, 232-33, 287 on Duldul's decoration and mounting).

¹⁴²Shams Pīr's accounts of Viṣṇu's avatars drive toward his revelations concerning the ninth (involving Buddha in the *Mbh*; see below) and tenth. Referring to Kalki, Shams Pīr says, "Know the *avatār* of this fourth age is Nakalaṅka; know that he is a Muslim; . . . He has taken form (*avatār*) as the man Islām Shāh. . . . Shams revealed the Shāh's form, and they beheld the four-armed Swāmi. . . . They said, 'All our hopes have been fulfilled, for we saw Kṛṣṇa himself!'" (Kassam 1990, 192-93). This looks like an adroit allusion to Arjuna's relief at seeing the "familiar" four-armed Kṛṣṇa after seeing Kṛṣṇa's frightful apocalyptic nature as Time in *BhG* 11.46-50. Similarly, Shams's promise to those who convert, "you will enter Heaven's (*svarga*) gate, O believers, attain the divine vision (*dīdār*) and your sins will vanish" (112, cf. 368), could recall *BhG* 2.32: "As if by chance presented, the open gate of heaven (*svargadvāra*)—happy the warriors, Pārtha, who get such a war." *Svargadvāra* is used frequently in the *Mbh*.

¹⁴³Shams does not mention the place (Kassam 1995, 175, 226), and neither does the "big" *Dasa avatāra*, but Khakee indicates that Kurukṣetra is the latter text's battlefield site (1972, 29).

¹⁴⁴Yodhā may refer to "warriors," as with Khakee's translation of *jodhā* (1972, 203).

¹⁴⁵Kassam 1995, 94-95, 113. Cīnab is perhaps Multan coded as Kalinga's fort, but not doomed, as is Yodhā (241-42), which is perhaps his kingdom. Another of Shams Pīr's *gināns* foretells that at the end of the Kali yuga, after the Shāh captures Delhi, the Pāṇḍavas will join him in expelling the wicked from Multan (166; cf. 179, 202). In a fairly recent Gujarati biography of Shams Pīr, Cīnab is said to lie on his route from Ghazna to Kashmir (375). Kassam's history behind Cīnab is, however, forced (see n. 131). In the "big" *Dasa avatāra*, Cīnab has become China (*Cīna Māhā Cīna*), although also a fortified city (192) in Cīna Māhā Cīna that is once called Cīṇab (333).



Surjādevi is faithful to the Imām.¹⁶⁴ Although Cīnab, Kalinga's fort, remains obscure, Kalin-ga's head falls there,¹⁶⁵ and it is conquered, like Mārō (or Kalinga), by a group which its king fails to recognize that includes enigmatic forms of Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas, and an important 'Alid Muslim—Ḥusayn rather than Mīrā Tālhan. In the gināns, the Pāṇḍavas and the Saiyids of India join ranks against this Kali yuga demon. In *Ālhā*, the Pāṇḍavas reincarnate in the Banāphars and Mīrā Tālhan to defeat not only him, but Prithīrāj, incarnation of Duryodhana, himself the incarnation of Kali.

Then there is Draupadī, much esteemed in Shams Pīr's gināns and reincarnated in *Ālhā* as the satī Belā. Shams centers her story on one scene: "Luckily, he came as Kṛṣṇa! He protected Draupadī with reams of cloth."¹⁶⁶ The *he* in question is of course the Shāh 'Alī, who also becomes the Buddha to save Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas. These enigmas probably have something to do with Buddhist-Muslim accommodations in Sind. Taking the various passages from Pīr Shams's gināns together, the story is roughly consistent with the more elaborated version of the "big" *Dasa avatāra*.¹⁶⁷ Whereas the Kṛṣṇa avatar is the Shāh's eighth and focuses on Kṛṣṇa's childhood, his ninth is that of Buddha in which he comes to the Pāṇḍavas and is recognized by Draupadī when she is fixed in concentration; she then delivers him "into the hands of Yudhiṣṭhira," after which, while seated "in deep concentration (*dhyāna*)" himself, the

¹⁶⁴See n. 135 above.

¹⁶⁵In the "big" *Dasa avatāra*, "Cīna Māhā Cīna"/Cīnab is China. Kālīgo (as he is usually called) or Kārīgā (Khakee 1972, 184) "descends" into it at the end of the Dvāpara yuga and rules there through the whole Kali yuga, at the end of which his city "sinks" (one thinks of possible astronomical readings) when his head is thrown back there from "India" (*Jambudvīpa*) as a result of his losing battle with the Shāh (39, 352, 365-367).

¹⁶⁶Kassam 1995, 216, translating *Pañcāvalī* (i.e., Pāñcālī) by "Draupadī" here. See similarly Khakee 1972, 29.

¹⁶⁷Here Kṛṣṇa, the Shāh's eighth incarnation, directly becomes his ninth by becoming the Buddha after Kṛṣṇa has killed Kamsa. As Buddha, he then kills Duryodhana, his battlefield being *Kulakhetra* rather than Kuruksetra (Khakee 1972, 342-43). Beyond what Khakee translates from the text, his introduction adds the more adversarial story that the Buddha speaks Farsī, and comes in deformed shape while the Pāṇḍavas are performing a yajña to expiate the killings at Kuruksetra. He tells them that the Nabi (Prophet) is now the incarnaton of Brahmā, and that the Brahmans' teachings about idols, tīrthas, the Gangā, and worship of stones and trees are "now wrong." Bhīma, **impressed by the Satpanth teachings**, tells Yudhiṣṭhira. The Brahmans try to prevent from Yudhiṣṭhira from hearing the Buddha, but the Buddha instructs the Pāṇḍavas to kill a cow. Yudhiṣṭhira puts the cow's head on his own head, and his brothers put the cow's legs on theirs. When the people of "Hasnāpuri" see them walking like this through the streets doing japa (muttering prayers) to Buddha, their talk washes away the Pāṇḍavas' sins. The Brahmans then use the cow's intestines for sacred threads. Buddha then tells the Pāṇḍavas to go to Hemācala (for the equivalent of their ascent to heaven) because the Kali era is about to begin (30-34).



realpatidar.com

348 Chapter Ten

Buddha saves the Pāṇḍavas, destroys the Kauravas, kills Duryodhana, and brings the Pāṇḍavas mokṣa.¹⁶⁸ Since Draupadī is protected by the Shāh-Kṛṣṇa at her disrobing, it seems that she must recognize the Shāh as Buddha on another, as yet undeterminable, occasion. In any case, three verses found in two of Pīr Shams's gināns are most revealing:

For the sake of the True Religion (*sat dharma*),
Draupadī endured suffering;
She did not surrender her chastity,
and thus she acquired every happiness (*sukha*).

The *sattī* did not forsake her purity,
and her hero came to meet her;
She fixed her concentration [upon him]
when the devil tried to disrobe her.

None is superior to Draupadī upon whom posterity
may shower great praise;
But today whoever performs the ghaṭ ceremony,
know that one to be a *sattī*.¹⁶⁹

The “hero” whom Draupadī recognizes in fixed concentration is apparently ‘Alī as Kṛṣṇa, who then becomes the Buddha.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, Belā’s hero, when it comes to rescuing her and lighting her pyre, is Ūdal, who is also hiddenly Kṛṣṇa. But most important, Shams celebrates Draupadī as the model *sattī* (pure or virtuous woman) for those who perform the *ghaṭ* or *ghaṭpāṭ* ceremony. According to Khan, “Draupadī is portrayed in the ginān/Āgam vānīs as an avatar of Devī and virtuous woman of the yuga—as there is one in each yuga, to accompany the avatar of Vishnu.”¹⁷¹

Let us note that these two gināns go on to mention that Medhas—that is, I believe, followers of low caste—are among the “deities,” and presumably *sattīs*, who join the ceremony.¹⁷² For although the term *sattī*, “chaste” or “pure,” is used pointedly in Shams’s gināns for other hero-

¹⁶⁸Kassam 1995, 192-93, 226, 242, 266, 289, 340. He also gives an army to the Pāṇḍavas’ victory, and inspires “great faith (*dīn*)” in the five and Nārāyaṇa (175)!

¹⁶⁹Kassam 1995, 266 and 289, quoting the former. In the latter, Draupadī “sacrificed all her happiness,” with the difference “due to a mere vowel” (289, n. 2).

¹⁷⁰See above, nn. 167 and 168, and also n. 142 on Kassam 1995, 192-93, a ginān presenting such shifts of planes and in epic idioms.

¹⁷¹Personal communication, December 12, 1997.

¹⁷²See above at nn. 148-150. Ginān 53 (Kassam 1995, 266-67) ends on this note, while ginān 65 (289-90) continues with other matters. See similarly Khakee 1972, 217-23, 302.

realpatidar.com



ines,¹⁷³ it also apparently refers to both men and women as *satī* (as in the passage just cited),¹⁷⁴ and is used for all who participate in the circular *garbī* dance from which Shams originates the *ghatpāt* ceremony for the **Satpanth and first imparts the pāval drink that culminates it.**¹⁷⁵ As to the term “deities” (apparently *devas*, as in the “big” *Dasa avatāra*, which combines terms to speak of “all the divine sages [*sarave deva riktsara*]” [221]), I believe it is used in the same fashion Khan suggests for the word *riktsara/rikhtsar* (from Sanskrit *R̥ṣi*), where it doubles for *mu'min*, the Muslim pious believer: it “was dictated by the desire of the missionaries to increase the standing of ordinary people and of those belonging to the depressed classes and to impart them with a kind of self-confidence so that they should be proud of following the new religion.”¹⁷⁶ Shams sings that gods and demons both inhabit human bodies (Kassam 1995, 268, 290), and there is an equivalence in number between the thirty-three crores of gods who are always saved (173, 340, 343, 349, 357) and the souls saved through the four yugas: five crores by Prahlād, seven by Hariścandra, nine by Yudhiṣṭhira, and “twelve crore pious (*satī*)” by Ṣadrudḍīn.¹⁷⁷ In the same *garbī* songs, Shams refers to a still greater number—ninety-nine crore—of “Meghas” or “Medhas” among the many souls saved with the “spread of the Ratnayug.”¹⁷⁸

Now as Kassam has nicely seen, Shams Pīr’s cycle of twenty-eight *garbī* songs, which closes the collection she translates, tells a “narrative about conversion” in which the Pīr, joining the dance and singing “songs

¹⁷³For Queen Radiyā to whom the Lord as Śyāma gives divine nectar to revive her and her child (Kassam 1995, 176); for Emnābāī, a secret follower of Shams who lives with Hindu in-laws who regard her as defiling and passes Shams’s test of carrying an unbaked pot full of water (185-87, 249-50, 400); and for the goddess Durgā-Bhavānī as Kanyā-kumvārī, “youthful virgin” (382). Cf. also the “big” *Dasa avatāra*’s portrayal of Queen Surjā as a *satī* in an inverse situation, killing her husband Kālīgo by the power of her *satī*’s word (Khakee 1972, 345-51).

¹⁷⁴See n. 95 above and Kassam 1995, 271, 291-92. Cf. Shackle and Moir 1992, 89, 95, 103-5, 174-77, on the theme of the Pīr as handmaiden and bride.

¹⁷⁵See above, n. 94; Kassam 1995, e.g. 340; Shackle and Moir 1992, 13, 201.

¹⁷⁶Khan 1997b, 58, n. 11. In the *garbīs*, Shams Pīr stresses confidence or “firm faith” (*viśvās*) (Kassam 1995, 324, 333, 369), and promises that the *rikhtsars* will reign (322, 338, 364)—also a refrain in the “big” *Dasa avatāra*.

¹⁷⁷Kassam 1995, 340, 343, in the *garbīs*; 234, 240 (see n. 131) in “warlike” *gināns*. Kassam misleadingly considers the *garbīs*’ emphasis on saving souls a feature that distinguishes them from the other songs (110-11).

¹⁷⁸Kassam 1995, 340 (Meghas) and 343 (Medhas); see also 349: Medhas and the rest are “among the gathering filled with saints (*awliya*) who bear the Divine Light (*teja*)”—a gathering that recreates “primordial beginnings,” and includes the Creator and the Holy Five (see n. 155) plus Adam as created from Light (*nūr*); 338-39: identifying himself as Brahmā, Shams also gave the troubled *Rsis* *pāval* to drink at creation; 357: gods (*deva*), goddesses (*devī*), *Yakṣas*, and Medhas, Kinnars enter the True Path and attain salvation.



350 Chapter Ten

of wisdom,” transforms the garbī dancers’ Hindu consciousness about the nine nights of Navarātrī, plus the tenth night of Dasarā, into a Satpanth Ismā’īlī consciousness.¹⁷⁹ “Not ceasing to dance” through the full ten nights, yet gradually introducing “major change . . . without dramatic upheaval”¹⁸⁰ Shams, by the end, wins over not only five hundred dancing Hindu villagers and thirty-five of their thirty-six Veda-chanting and story-telling Brahmans, but, as the news spreads, “great kings” (363), the king, queen, and ministers of the city, the citizens and creatures of the city, and worshipers (*pūjārīs*), Jogīs, Sannyāsīs, and Bairāgīs (366). As both Khan and Kassam observe, in transforming Navarātrī and Dasarā from within, the garbī songs draw on popular folk expressions of that festival complex. For Khan, they show that the Ismā’īlī Pīrs “appreciated the importance” of the goddess cult and “understood that they could not simply uproot it, incompatible as it might have appeared within the Islamic tradition”; the “choice of a pot (*kalaś*, *ghaṭ*)” reflects its use in folk rituals to symbolize the goddess (Khan 1997b, 53-54). Kassam indicates that in Gujarat where “Garbī is a popular folkloric dance akin to . . . the *rāsa*” performed for Kṛṣṇa, it can refer to “an earthen pot with holes on the side” used to hold lamps “celebrating their deity’s luminous presence” (1995, 106). Shams Pīr begins his songs in anger at Navarātrī’s idolatrous worship of Durgā as Mātā Bhavānī (the fearsome Mother Bhavānī).¹⁸¹ But once he instructs his new followers to drink pāval from the enthroned pot, which fills their hearts with divine light (*nūr*), it is ultimately the goddess’s aniconic luminosity that he transforms into a vision (*ḍīdār*) of the luminous ‘Alī.¹⁸²

Supposing, however, that Shams Pīr’s garbī songs reflect an “inward, spiritual, and quiescent” turn after the “Satpanth was forced underground” by the fall of Alamūt, Kassam interprets this new consciousness as a “subtle but significant reorientation” away from that of the more warlike *gināns* (1995, 104). But as I have indicated, although one can see the latter as reflecting the realized eschatology of the Qiyāmah period (1162-1212) as it would have been sustained for some time thereafter, I do not think the warlike *gināns* are promises of military relief. And without that point of distinction from the garbī songs, I do not think one can hold that there is an “easy to miss” difference between them, since both reflect the same realized eschatology: one in mythic terms, the other

¹⁷⁹Kassam 1995, 106-11 (quote 106), 320-70; cf. Khan 1997b, 53-54.

¹⁸⁰See Khan 1997b, 54 (first quote); Kassam 1995, 108 (second quote), 359.

¹⁸¹Kassam 1995, 320-21; “O Careless Ones! Cast off [the goddess] Mātā Bhavānī! Serve instead the manifestation (*avatār*) of ‘Alī” (345).

¹⁸²Durgā is constituted from divine light (*tejas*) in the *Devī Māhātmyā* (2.10-33). Cf. Kassam 1995, 106-7, with a different emphasis.



in ritual terms, but both equally warlike, and also equally camouflaging their imagery by the “undergrounding” poetics of *taqīyya*. For after all, what Shams Pīr begins with is a Hindu consciousness about Navarātrī and Dasarā, with its iconic worship of the warrior goddess; and what he ends with is a *Satpanth Ismā’īlī* consciousness of a kind of “inner jihād,” with its vision of the luminous triumph of the conquering hidden Imām.

Yet the two religious languages remain in tension even in this final vision. Khan mentions that the holy water stored in the enthroned jar is referred to not only as *pāval* and *amī* or *amṛt* (*amṛta*, the drink of immortality in Sanskrit), but as *ghaṭ-gangā*,¹⁸³ in that the water pot representing Durgā “is supposed to contain water from the Ganga which is equated with divine ambrosia or *amṛt*” (1997b, 151, n. 7). Moreover, “milk seems to have been used during earlier rituals of the Nizaris.”¹⁸⁴ What is inescapable in such “songs of wisdom” is that the vision opened by drinking the *pāval* is afforded by Gangā water that comes from the heavenly Ganges, the Milky Way. The light imagery is not a sign of new quiescence (Kassam 1995, 110) but a realization, in both *Ismā’īlī* and Hindu terms, of what is in the cup: not just liquid but liquid light—the celestial milky light of the heavenly river. In the *garbī* songs, one not only drinks this light but bathes in it, and is showered by it.¹⁸⁵ Let us not forget, the dancers dance at night.¹⁸⁶ In one of Shams’s other *gināns*, when a blind mendicant satisfies Shams’s demand, which others have refused, for someone to willingly offer his own flesh, the Shāh brings the “cupful of Light (*nūr*),” and when the blind mendicant drinks it, “lo! he witnessed the whole universe!” (207). Most decisively, on Shams Pīr’s ninth night of Navarātrī,

He danced with a purpose
and imparted many teachings.
He praised the Panjtan Pāk¹⁸⁷
who were born of Divine Light (*nūr*).
From the Light (*nūr*) of the Panjtan Pāk,
[Pole Star] Dhruva was created.

¹⁸³1997b, 135, “the last term also being used by the Gujarati Nizarpanthis.”

¹⁸⁴Khan 1997b, 137, referring to a discussion on 71-72. Cf. Nanji 1988, 66; Shackle and Moir 1992, 75, 161: the *gināns* refer to five ingredients—milk, sugar, clarified butter, wheat flour, and water.

¹⁸⁵Kassam 1995, 328, 330, 334, 343, 352; cf. 211, a non-*garbī* *ginān* in which the Shāh is a gardener who brings showers of light.

¹⁸⁶A *ginān* verse by Sayyid Imam Shah makes such a setting explicit: “Keep awake during the last watches of the night and reflect, o brother believer. From heavens above the houris have come, bringing vessels of light” (Shackle and Moir 1992, 91 and 172).

¹⁸⁷See n. 155 above: the Holy Five of the Shī’as, all of whom are now mentioned.



realpatidar.com

352 Chapter Ten

It took him 70,000 years to ascend,
and it will take him the same to descend.
Prophet (*nabī*) Muḥammed is the name of that star,
and 'Alī is [his] crown.
Around his beautiful neck flashes
the brilliant Light (*nūr*) of Fāṭimah.¹⁸⁸
Bathed in Light (*teja*) between his two ears¹⁸⁹
are the Imāms Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. . . . (Kassam 1995, 354)

Muhammad is Dhruva, the Pole Star, with the other four holy ones of the Panjtan Pāk adorning and concentrated within him. Around him all other stars—in epic and purāṇic terms, Ṛṣis—revolve. Yet Dhruva-Muhammad also ascends and descends. This is something more precise than an “interiorization of salvation as eternal life in a heavenly abode of bliss” (Kassam 1995, 111). Shams deploys Islamic and epic-purāṇic “technical languages” of astronomical myth.¹⁹⁰

Not pursuing such points, Kassam does recognize the basic imagery: “An image is created of a heaven filled with divine light (*nūr*) where millions of enlightened souls congregate by the Ganges and where the 124,000 prophets are also gathered” (Kassam 1995, 111). Indeed, a *ginān* attributed to Ṣadrudḍīn invokes the Ganges as *gatiuḥ gaṅgā*, “the holy stream (Gangā) of the congregations” (Shackle and Moir 1992, 89 and 169). Yet Kassam does not mention that directly following the verse on the prophets, the very next one says, “Ḥusayn’s followers will be present, and Light (*nūr*) will shower upon them” (1995, 344). As in the warlike *gināns*, Ḥusayn’s army will be resurrected to join the Shāh’s eschatological army. Here, with Ḥusayn’s army made manifest to the *garbī* dancers, we realize that the *ghatpāt* is a double evocation of

¹⁸⁸Making her the necklace of the Pole Star, Muhammad.

¹⁸⁹I suggest this refers to the practice of concentration (*dhyāna*), as when Buddha destroys the Kauravas (see n. 168 above), or when Shams says, “Focus between the brows where the sun is ablaze, and take the universe in the hand” (Kassam 1995, 334). For a similar verse on the Holy Five attributed to Ṣadrudḍīn, see Shackle and Moir 1992, 109, 183.

¹⁹⁰See chap. 9, n. 87. For eighth-century Persian Shī’a background to such “Ismaili gnosis,” see Corbin 1983, 169: “For all eternity, *Five Lights*, of *five colors*, exist in the Sea of Whiteness (*Bahr al-baydā*), the heavenly Palace of the Limit of Limits. These Lights are the ‘members’ (*jawāriḥ*) and the epiphanies of a single Person of Light (*shaks-e nūrānī*); in human form, on the plane of terrestrial humanity (*bashariya*), they appear as Muḥammad, Ali, Fātima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. . . . Beneath the Sea of Whiteness, nine domes . . . are arranged, each with its distinctive color. . . . [reaching down to the] microcosmic Earth which is the ‘Earth of the Heart.’” Shams’s description is not unlike that of Durgā formed of light in the *Devī Māhātmyā* (see n. 178). Note that in his cosmic roaming (see Kassam 1995, 320), at Meru, Shams “witnessed many wonders that were endless in number,” and “bade the sun [to descend]” (350).

realpatidar.com



Navarātri-Dasarā and Muharram. Following Kassam's insightful analysis of rapports between Navarātri-Dasarā and the Satpanth ghatpāt, and the story of Shams Pīr's transformation of the former into the latter, it would seem that Satpanth Ismā'ilīs made the *ghatpāt* a mystical equivalent, suitable for times of taqīyya, of both Dasarā and Muharram.

There is little information about South Asian Ismā'ilī practices concerning Muharram. Khan informs me that the Āghā Khān prohibited Muharram participation in the nineteenth century, while Seyyed Hossein Nasr indicates that such participation is nonetheless common.¹⁹¹ But one source is decisive. During the recital of the special prayer that accompanies the ghatpāt among Nizārī Satpanthīs “in their *jama'at khanas* [congregation places] on Friday evenings and other special evenings . . . a clump of earth from Karbala, over which the *hāzar* Imam has recited some verses of the Qur'an, is dissolved. This is done on a special low table, in a white china pot containing clean water. It is then drunk by all the members of the community, who are present. This same water is also given to an Ismaili on his death bed.”¹⁹² The ghatpāt thus transforms Navarātri while commemorating Karbalā. At night-long ghatpāt vigils—on star-filled moonless nights, in fact—when the cup is passed that illumines the presence of 'Alī, the vision (*darśan*, *dīdār*) of his messianic army is illumined by the dust of Karbalā.¹⁹³ In reverse, the saving of souls through the yugas, which Kassam considers a distinguishing feature of the garbīs, is found not only in them, but in the warlike *gināns* as well.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, the warlike/quiescent opposition simply does not hold.¹⁹⁵ In two successive garbīs, Shams sings, “This is the age (*yuga*) of the last battlefield; O my Brothers, be vigilant!” “no fifth age” follows (346, 347). It would appear that the aforementioned Ratnayug, the “age of jewels,” is another name for the luminous cosmos of the apocalypse. Another garbī mentions that those whose minds are pure can witness the “pious gathering” of saved Medhas and Rīkhīsars, along with the

¹⁹¹Personal communications, December 1997.

¹⁹²Khakee 1972, 408, indicating also that Imāmshāhīs do the ceremony with a tiny clump of earth from the tomb of Imām Shāh.

¹⁹³It is worth noting that the religiously “dialogic” Meos (see chap. 8, n. 43), whose singers know both a Mewati folk *Mbh* and “a rare narrative called *Hasan Husain*” (see chap. 1, n. 3) along with stories about the martyrdom and dismemberment of 'Alī (Mayaram 1997, 258), celebrate both Dasarā and Muharram (46, 60).

¹⁹⁴See n. 177. One might look further at the presumed lateness—Shackle and Moir even propose the late eighteenth century (1992, 200)—of the garbī songs. While they mention the names of later Imāms and Pīrs (Kassam 1997, 105), the criterion weakens when we realize that Shams's other *gināns* also mention the most prominent of them, Sadruddīn (169, 234).

¹⁹⁵Cf. Khakee 1972, 79-84, 224, 238-40, 263: the saving of the five, seven, nine, and twelve crores of souls through each *yuga* is accompanied by battles, and all the souls thus saved join the Shāh's apocalyptic army, coming in a moment to join him on his chariot.



realpatidar.com

354 Chapter Ten

Pāṇḍavas and the usual purāṇic figures, “all present at the site of the Ganges”; “Pervading the gathering of the Ganges, they fill it night and day with Light.”¹⁹⁶ The faithful who realize that they are Ṛṣis are no less the oppressed of the earth than they are stars above.

Finally, the cup of light will also be drunk in the eschatological marriage. Shams sings:

Few understand the *ghaṭ* ceremony
and the stature of the water-pot;
The virgin of the universe [Viśva-kumvārī] will drink it
and wed Śyāma, Lord of the three worlds.

She is called Bībī Fāṭimah—
know that she is the virgin of the universe;
Pīr Shams says: the *ghaṭ* was established
by the order (*farmān*) of the Shāh. (Kassam 1995, 265; cf. 268)

It will be the ultimate interreligious marriage, for Śyāma, once again, is Kṛṣṇa (that is, 'Alī as Kṛṣṇa), and Fāṭimah, Muhammad's daughter, is 'Alī's wife. Clearly Fāṭimah, like Draupadī, is a virtuous woman of the yuga—*this* yuga. As Khan shows, it is from this ginānic theme that the *Āgam vāṇīs* of the Rāmdeo cult derive their promise that the Nikāṇk avatar will consummate his long unfulfilled betrothal to a Dalit girl who represents the earth's oppressed and the earth itself.¹⁹⁷ Alternately, Ṣadrudīn sings, “Soon my righteous sovereign will appear, the mounted Tenth Lord. The Lord Ali will wed the maiden creation”; but on the model of Muhammad's marriages, “four happy brides” will “greet the Master of the Resurrection (*kāyam sāmī*)” at the apocalyptic ghaṭpāt (Shackle and Moir 1992, 89). There is also a Brahmanized variant in the *Kalki Purāṇa* in which Kalki marries two Kṣatriya princesses (Khan 1997a, 410-12). The purāṇic story would seem to bear much the same relation to the apocalypse of the *Āgam vāṇīs* that the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*'s *Kṛṣṇāṃśacarita* bears to oral *Ālhā*. As one would expect, the *Kalki Purāṇa* calls Kalki's chief antagonist Kali rather than Kalinga (411), reminding us that Kali takes on new roles in the *Pratisarga Parvan* as a

¹⁹⁶Kassam 1995, 258. Recall that Shams makes the sun descend; see n. 185, and the stories mentioned by Kassam (79 and n. 24, 379). Recall that according to Alberuni, Hindu astronomers place Multan on the line that runs from Laṅkā to Meru (chap. 4, n. 5).

¹⁹⁷See n. 96 above. Khan takes Viśva-kumvārī, “literally the Virgin Universe or the Virgin Earth . . . as a symbol of the converted community,” or of “the mystic union of the Nizārī community with God” (1997a, 413). The theme recurs in the “big” Dasa avatāra (Khakee 1972, 405-6).

realpatidar.com



Kuran as
4th and
ultimate
last veda

whole, and in the *Kṛṣṇāṃśacarita* in particular, to enhance his profile as the reigning demon of the Kali yuga. Remembering that Draupadī is the model satī for the ghātpāt, and that primary among the satīs whom she inspires are Dalit Medhas and Meghas, we must keep these varied identifications of the eschatological bride in mind in considering the low status Belā, and other Draupadīs we shall meet.

Although Shams Pīr's garbīs tell that he finally gets the Hindus to throw away their idols and sacred threads and to see the *Qur'ān* as the fourth and ultimate Veda, the transformation he works is one that carries to the very end a kind of religious bilingualism—in Kassam's terms, "a religious language mutually recognized by Hindus and Satpanth Ismā'īlīs alike" (1995, 110). Yet I believe it is not enough to say that the gināns "reveal a pedagogic method" by which the *dā'īs* (missionaries) "were able to lead [the faithful] to the 'true path' (*satpanth*) consisting of nothing more than the fulfillment of their former beliefs."¹⁹⁸ They also left this space of "fluid signs" open to coexistence in a world where they could continue to value alliances with varying shades of comparably "open" Hindus: Dalits, villagers, kings and queens, and, as we have now seen, Bairāgīs, Sannyāsīs, and in particular Nāths. Khan observes that if the Nizārīs "absorbed a number of Nath elements, and still more, 'infiltrated' the Nath milieu (very much in the manner of spies penetrating foreign circles under a forged identity)," the Nāths, too, "when they had been approached by Ismaili missionaries . . . would have retained certain Nizari influences."¹⁹⁹ More than this, it would seem that Nizārīs and Nāths were primary among those who spun material from their own and other Muslim-Hindu interactions to weave a common cloth that they, and others they influenced, could deploy on either of two different narrative registers.²⁰⁰ In the gināns and *Āgam vāṇīs*, Nizārīs and those they

¹⁹⁸Mallison 1989, 94-95; cf. Khan 1996, 36.

¹⁹⁹Khan 1997b, 223; cf. 46-51, 139-40, 220-34. As we have seen, Nāths, Jogīs, and Bairāgīs not only join Shams but trumpet and applaud 'Alī's eschatological army (at n. 151 above).

²⁰⁰I emphasize a double register as something open to "conscious" narrative permutations on both sides, with future and past interchangeable, since both Hindus and Ismā'īlīs have cyclical heirohistories (on those of the Ismā'īlīs, see Daftary 105, 139-40, 219, 231-49, 291-98; Corbin 1957). Others have interpreted the gināns' correspondences differently: e.g., Nanji as "anagogic," "mystic in the broadest sense," and a product of "mythopoesis" (1978, 100, 114); Asani as retaining "models of proper behaviour" for the "new converts" (1991, 14); Shackle and Moir as "confused" "accretions added by later authors" (1992, 23); Kassam 1994 more suggestively as a [potentially mutual] relation of figure and ground. Khan (see n. 92) and Kassam (1995, 6-19) are surely right to stress politics and critique confusionistic models of syncretism, and Khan to emphasize the messianic. For valuable comparative parallels to the hermeneutics of taqīyya, multiple and dialogic messianisms, open secrecy, and "justice beyond the law," see Caputo (1997, 69-143) on Jacques Derrida.



would then be the Plantain Mountain. The name Katalimalai for a new village of the heroic and immortal dead would be another fitting transposition of Rajput oral epic folklore, and a tribute to the Rajput-Afghan culture it celebrated, with not only a temple for Desing and a monument for his Pathān comrade, but memorials for the “other Muhammadans” who were their followers.¹³⁶ According to both Krishnan and the wife of Saiyad Bakar Sahib who live in “Kadali” today, there are tunnels from somewhere near the Nīlāmpuṇṭi tank: one to Gingee fort and one to Arcot. The Gingee folklore that links Rāja Desing with subterranean caves and an ever-renewable gold-producing tree thus has another extension. Could it also have another complement, and possibly its earliest inspiration, in the naming of the hill and village of Desing’s death after the mountain forest of the Nāth immortals? This would put closure to his ballad with a folklore like that of other oral epics that equate caves and mountains with the otherworldly destinies of their heroes.¹³⁷

Rikhisar
means
faithful

As to Ismā’īlī ghosts, we have caught only glimpses, but I believe they are impressive. To begin with the Muslim figures, what is a Fakir doing with the heavenly Ṛṣis on Mount Meru? At the base of the Satpanth’s system of correspondences for Ismā’īlī missions in India is the equation between *mu’min*, the general Arabic term for “pious believer,” and *ṛṣi*, with the latter, under the form *rikhīsar*, used to designate the Satpanth faithful.¹³⁸ Rather than being a term limited mainly to Brahmins, as it is in Sanskrit literatures, “Ṛṣi” was “applied to all the followers of the Nizari Ismaili sect, regardless of their rank and caste” (Khan 1997b, 135). Among followers of Rāmdeo, Meghwāl Dalits in particular consider themselves “the direct descendants of one Megh Rishi” (130), and Satgur Nur (also called Nur Muhammad), the first “archetypal” Pir sent to the subcontinent from Alamūt, is also called Matang Ṛṣi, with the story that

¹³⁶Cf. the Kabristan as cult center for Rāmdeo (chap. 10, § C). Kadali hamlet seems to have a mixed Hindu and Muslim population today with the latter, some say, having declined.

¹³⁷See chap. 9, nn. 73 and 74, and above, nn. 13 and 14, and recall the frame-setting of *Desing* on Mount Meru. Mount Gandhamadāna, site of the Plantain Forest in the *Kṛṣṇāṁśa-carita*, known also simply as “Himālaya” in the *Mbh* (3.157.1-10), is a vantage point from which the Pāṇḍavas can see the cosmological mountains Mandara and Meru (160.1-37) and be “within range” of the “great peak Himavat” from which they march with Draupadī toward Mount Meru on their ascent to heaven (17.2.1-2; see Hildebeitel forthcoming). The “Plantain Forest” is already the alchemical paradise (with a “philosopher’s stone”) of the twelfth-century Telugu Lingāyat *vacana* poetess Mahādevīyakka (Ramanujan 1973, 133), and before that, the haunt of Hanumān, whom a song attributed to Tulsidas later recognizes as a model Rajput (see chaps. 9, following n. 74, and 10, n. 34). The Kajali Forest also figures along with Gorakhnāth in the *Guga* epic, whose Chauhān Rajput hero also rides a flying blue horse and encounters Prithirāj Chauhān, who establishes the worship of Guga’s flag (Lapoint 1978).

¹³⁸Khan 1997b, 47; see chap. 10 at n. 176.



normatively by Muslims and Hindus, these two speak the same Hindu-Muslim argot in their invocations. *Mōvuttukkāraṇ* is the most frequent voice of religious doubling. In the printed ballad he falls shouting, “Allah Allah, Hari Kōvintā,” and attains *Vaikuṇṭha*; in Srinivasan’s telling, he goes without a cry to *Paraloka*, which according to S. Ravindran is a name Tamil Christians use when reciting, “Our father who art in *Paraloka*.” But most interesting is his wedding. The printed ballad has him say, “Allah Allah” and “*Rāma Rāma*” when about to tie the *tālī*;¹⁴² in Srinivasan’s song, he chants “*Allah Rādhā*” at this moment. Similarly, when Srinivasan’s *Māyappakkiri* puts on a blood-smeared *Vaiṣṇava* forehead mark and leaves *Gingee* with *Desing*’s message, a *Fakir* in the guise of a *Bairāgī*, he shouts, “*Allah Rādhā*” and “*Nagore Allah*.” *Māyappakkiri* carries the message from *Desing* that brings *Mōvuttukkāraṇ* to leave his wedding not only unconsummated but incomplete.

Taken as a whole, the Hindu deities called on with Allah sound north Indian—especially *Rādhā*,¹⁴³ who is little known in the south. But why call “Allah Allah, Hari Kōvintā” at death and “Allah Allah, *Rāma Rāma*” or “*Allah Rādhā*” at a wedding? The naming of Allah with *Hari Kōvintā* probably connects with other instances where *Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa* is called on in salvific situations. As to “*Allah Rāma*” and “*Allah Rādhā*,” it is the latter pairing, found only in Srinivasan’s version, that should alert us. Indeed, the printed version may normalize and masculinize by “correcting” “*Rādhā*” to “*Rāma*” to leave Allah in a less compromising situation. “*Allah Rādhā*.” Either this is doggerel or something profound. *Habibur Rahman* suggested that the invocation may play on the phrase *radhiya Allahu ’anha*, “May Allah’s contentment be upon her (or him),” an honorific used after an especially saintly person’s name.¹⁴⁴ But for Srinivasan, it is clearly “*Rādhā Allah*,” which, as *Habibur Rahman* mused, is no problem, since if Allah has a hundred names he can have a thousand. In any case, *Desing* is a text that resembles the *Satpanth gināns* and the *Āgam vāṇīs* of forgotten *Ismā’īlī* sects, and is also similar to *Ālhā*, in having distinct yet interpenetrating Hindu and Muslim planes of allusion. Here, *Rādhā* is coupled not with *Kṛṣṇa* but with Allah. Before *Mōvuttuk-*

¹⁴²In *Karunānāntacuvāmi*’s edition, which has some differences in this scene, *Mōvuttukkāraṇ* says, “Allah Allah,” “*Rāma Rāma*,” and “*Kōvintā Kōvintā*” as he prepares to tie the *tālī*, at which point *Desing*’s messengers come shouting “*Rāmu Rāmurē Rāmu Rāmurē Mōvuttukkāraṇē*” (“*Rām Rām*,” the north Indian greeting) as they bring the letter that stops him before tying it (1875, 49).

¹⁴³See W&G 192 and chap. 9, § C: in an invocation *Rādhā* is one of the seven virgins who pray at *Nimsar-Misrik* (*Naimiṣa Forest*) and obtain husbands, in her case *Kṛṣṇa*—even though she is not ordinarily a virgin when she unites with *Kṛṣṇa*, or ordinarily his wife.

¹⁴⁴Conversation centered on *Abu Sail* 1998, 17, about the women of paradise, which uses the phrase five times. Thanks to *Seyyed Hosein Nasr* for translation and comment.



12 Barbarīka, Aravān, Kūttāntavar: Furthering the Case of the Severed Head

From the late twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, Nāths, Bairāgīs, Jogīs, and Satpanth Ismā'īlīs, as we have now seen, minted underground *Mahābhāratas* with interregional and interreligious currency. But they were not just talking between themselves. There were others for whom the *Mahābhārata* was already important: and, safe to say, not just the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* (which was by this time regionalized in different recensions¹), but regionally grounded folk *Mahābhāratas*. The Ismā'īlī case is especially interesting, for Pīr Shams and other early ginān composers would not have made so much of the *Mahābhārata* were it not already important to the communities they addressed in Sind. These included—even before the Nāths, Bairāgīs, and Jogīs, who show up only at the end of Shams's garbī dance—villagers, Brahmans, and little hinterland Rajput kings and queens who were fond of Navarātri and Dasarā. From this point, leaving our Ismā'īlī hypothesis behind, we must raise the question of what kind of prior folk *Mahābhāratas* and, for that matter, *Rāmāyaṇas*,² such hinterland populations, centered in their Rajputs,

¹The Poona Critical Edition of the *Mbh* begins its work with regional manuscripts going back to this period and implying, of course, much earlier recensional history.

²Although I focus mainly on folk *Mbh*, the same little-rajputization process is seen in some folk *Rām*. Along with *Pābūjī*, I note two indications: “Nundodaree [i.e., Mandodarī], the chief wife of Ravana [Rāvaṇa] . . . after the death of her husband, went to Ramu [Rāma] weeping. Ramu, not knowing who she was, gave her this blessing, that she should never become a widow. Finding his mistake, (having just killed her husband,) he ordered Hunooman continually to throw wood into the fire, according to a proverb among the Hindoos, that as long as the body of the husband is burning, a woman is not called a widow. To this day, therefore, Hunooman keeps laying logs on the fire; and every time a Hindoo puts his fingers in his ears and hears a sound, he says he hears the bones of Ravunu burning”; “Ram Chunder, in order to ascertain whether Seeta was innocent or polluted, in consequence of having been detained by Rawun, put her into a furnace. . . . Thus was her innocence established; and burning of the Holee [the fires of the Spring Holi festival], as it is termed, has been established in commemoration of that fiery ordeal” (Pogson [1828] 1971, 4, 71). These examples, drawn it seems from familiarity with Bundela folklore, suggest satī folklores. Satpanth gināns also transform folk *Rām* themes (Kassam 1995, 174, 192; Shackle and Moir 1992, 193), but with no such intensity as *Mbh* ones. In the “big”



provide the very heart of the Tamil story. But there is something unsettling. It is almost as if these Tamilized Kaurava widows haven't fully absorbed this ideology, and *have* to be deceived into taking the necessary steps. Through all this Draupadī lives on, and does not become a satī herself. Why should she? Although she laments her sons, her husbands are still alive.

B. Draupadī Becomes Belā

Yet by becoming Belā, Draupadī does become a satī. It is through Belā, a “portion of Draupadī,” and particularly through Belā's hair, that Draupadī's fiery nature finally self-combusts. Nor does Belā burn alone. In the *Kṛṣṇāṃśacarita*, she is the “Velā-fire (*velāgnī*)” that consumes big and little kings alike (24.12). In *Ālhā*, a mass satī combines with a folklore of vows and curses. Belā makes no vow concerning her hair, but it is her hair that fulfills her vow to become a satī. And when she makes that vow upon learning of Brahmā's imminent death,¹¹ she “prophesies that in three months and seventeen days Delhi will be sacked, and every married woman there” will be widowed like her (W&G 263). Once Belā has become satī, “Sunwā and all the other widows . . . throw themselves into the great blazing pit which had formed Belā's funeral pyre” (273). The only satīs mentioned are from the Mahobā party: consistent with other reversals, the Delhi widows are too lax to become satīs, as is implied by Brahmānanda's censure of the surviving Kauravāṃśa widows.¹² Whether it is because they are wives of Pāṇḍavāṃśas or just because they are north Indian, those who do become satīs do not have to be deceived into doing so. Yet we should be more precise when we say “north Indian.” Pīr Shams's *ginān* on Draupadī and the ghatpāt ceremony takes things in a different direction: the suffering Draupadī, “upon whom posterity may shower such great praise,” is a model of satī and a model for satīs. But she does not *become satī* herself and neither do her Satpanth satī followers—either the men or women among them.¹³ In contrast, the Tamil Draupadī and the north Indian Belā are both provided with Rajput myths to explain the jauhar-like mass satīs of other widows who follow

¹¹It is not a case of “ambition” to become a satī before Brahmā's death, which would be “to will that her husband's death precede hers” (Harlan 1996, 235). It is Brahmā's request.

¹²Kishan Sharma of Agra makes the point that “All the women of Ālhā's family become satīs.” That Sunwā does so in particular is instructive, since Ālhā never dies, but goes to the forest of immortals. The Delhi court's lax attitude toward satī is also evidenced by Agmā's counsel to Belā to forget satī and marry someone else, e.g., as Belā infers in rejecting the advice, a “Musulmān Mughul” (W&G 263).

¹³See chap. 10 at nn. 169 and 173. I do not press the point that Draupadī's Tamil followers, usually both men and women (Hiltebeitel 1991a, 441-46), have this Satpanth precedent.